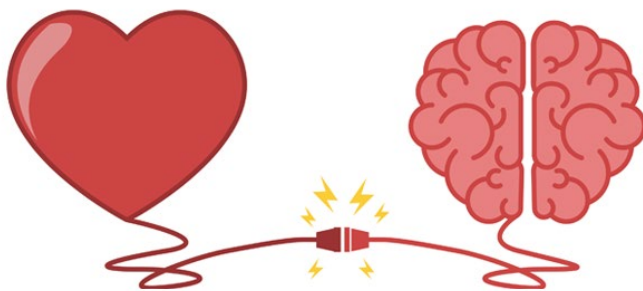


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10 emotional intelligence tips from the masters

Your EQ impacts almost every aspect of your career success
By **Stephanie Overby** | June 11, 2019



Psychologists Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer conjured up the term "[emotional intelligence](#)" (EI) in 1990 to describe a form of social intelligence that includes “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action.” In his 1995 best seller, [Emotional Intelligence](#), Daniel Goleman argued that EI, in fact, outweighed cognitive intelligence as the best predictor of business success.

Some three decades on, EI has been shown to be a critical factor in nearly every aspect of leadership effectiveness – from managing change to working with teams to navigating interpersonal relationships.

Yet EI is not simply a skill IT leaders acquire and put on a shelf, but something that takes diligence and [practice to incorporate into daily interactions](#). To help with that, we’ve gathered some timeless tips from experts for bringing EI to bear at work. Think of it as a master class in emotional intelligence.

1. Be the change you seek

Want more emotionally intelligent behavior from your teams? Look in the mirror. Leaders in EI have a kind of superpower: They set the tone for an organization by modeling the EI they wish to foster, instead of reacting to events and circumstances. “This means [leaders] need to spend some time thinking about what behaviors they want out of their teams and think about their own behaviors and how their actions may

be contributing to the culture of their workplaces,” says Janele Lynn, owner of the [Lynn Leadership Group](#), who helps leaders build trusting relationships through EI. “They’ll need to apply their emotional intelligence skills to be aware of their own behaviors and apply self-control over those behaviors to set the temperature [for] their team.”

2. Listen with your third ear

It’s easy to hear what someone is saying; to listen is another matter. People high in emotional intelligence listen with their third ear,” says Dr. Steven J. Stein, founder and executive chairman for [Multi-Health Systems](#), which develops and administers Emotional Quotient (EQ) assessments.

“It’s not just what somebody says to you, it’s also the underlying message,” Stein says. “What do they really mean? When somebody says they’re fine, for example, is that really true? Or is there more going on in their life that they’re avoiding talking about for now?” Gather data beyond what is being said.

In addition, active listening can help to fill in the gaps. “Be fully present and focused on what [the other person is] saying, without thinking of a reply,” says Harvey Deutschendorf, author of [The Other Kind of Smart: Simple Ways to Boost Your Emotional Intelligence for Greater Personal Effectiveness and Success](#)

3. Stop brain hijackings: Pause

When the amygdala senses a threat, it literally takes over your brain's prefrontal cortex.

During the [Brainpower](#) webcast series, Goleman explored how leaders can build their capacity for emotional intelligence by understanding the neuroscience behind negative emotional reactions. When the amygdala senses a threat, Goleman explained, it literally takes over the prefrontal cortex in what he refers to as an “amygdala hijack”. The result? A sudden emotional reaction – anger, fear, despair – that leads to a response that is often inappropriate, disproportionate, or ineffective.

The solution? When you sense this is happening, pause. Practice a [mindfulness exercise](#). Focus on your breath. Go for a walk. Or simply take a moment to acknowledge the reaction. Any of these pauses can serve to deactivate the amygdala and energize the prefrontal cortex.

4. Know thyself

One of the most important qualities of a leader with high emotional intelligence is that they know themselves – especially how they feel. “While many people know if they feel good or bad, high EI people know if they are agitated, anxious, excited, fearful, or nervous,” says Stein. “It may sound trivial, but it’s not. By clearly understanding your feelings, you are better able to manage them. This has been well documented in research over the past 25 years.”

There are a range of situations where you might not be clear about how you feel or your feelings are overwhelming you. “Take a minute to think about it,” says Lynn. “Taking the time to engage the thinking part of your brain and become aware of how you feel about a particular situation can help you respond in an emotionally intelligent way.”

5. Identify your triggers

What do you know for certain will leave you feeling embarrassed or humiliated?

You can't predict your reaction to every situation, but there are some circumstances that you know will push your buttons. [Gill Hasson](#), career coach and author of [Emotional Intelligence: Managing Emotions to Make a Positive Impact on Your Life and Career](#), suggests writing down those situations so that you're not blindsided by them every time.

What can suddenly make you unsure or doubtful? What immediately frustrates you? What sort of situations leave you feeling disappointed and resentful? What do you know for certain will leave you feeling embarrassed or humiliated?

"Periodically ask yourself what you are feeling in a variety of situations," says Andrew Atkins, senior vice president of research, innovation, and practice at executive coaching and assessment firm [Bates Communications](#), who suggests even setting alerts on your phone to check in on your feelings.

6. Take responsibility

Did you blame someone else for feeling the way you did?

While you're thinking of those occasions when you have felt guilty, angry, upset, jealous, or disappointed, consider your first reaction. Did you blame someone else for feeling the way you did? At any point did you think or say "You / he / she /they made me feel... ?" "In the future, try to be more aware of the situations and events when you blame other people and situations for how and what you feel. In any one situation where there is difficulty or contention, ask yourself 'How or what do I feel?'" and then answer yourself by saying 'I feel' and not 'he's is making me feel,'" says Hasson.

7. Display EI to elevate your credibility

Most leaders view emotional intelligence as integral to the personal connections they have at work. But that's only part of the story, Atkins says. "The self-awareness you demonstrate through your humility and the self-control evident in your restraint both contribute to the trust and connection you can generate with others," Atkins says. "In addition, your emotional intelligence can contribute to how credible others see you as a leader they want to follow when you demonstrate resonance in being attuned to where others are on an issue and composure in times of stress. Both composure and resonance are qualities honed through experience and demonstrate you've been able to learn and become an even better leader."

8. Leave judgment at the door

EI can be particularly helpful when offering feedback to individuals or teams. Effective feedback can inspire or motivate; but poorly delivered feedback can lead to resentment, anger, and decreased performance. Deuschendorf suggests keeping a couple things when preparing to deliver feedback. First, "make it timely," he says "Check your emotions before meeting with the employee. Ask them for feedback and actively listen and let them know what you heard them say. Stick to the facts and leave out judgments."

9. Boost your empathy

“It’s harder than it sounds, and will take some practice, but people will appreciate even the clumsiest of efforts.”

EI and **empathy** go hand in hand. In fact, empathy is what differentiates the best leaders, argues Iain Aitken, CEO of **RocheMartin**, which offers EI training and assessment to individuals and organizations. “It involves two dimensions: a cognitive dimension – understanding the task that other people must perform – and an emotional dimension – acknowledging the humanity of others.”

Leaders should get to know their employees better on a personal level in order to recognize and then validate their emotional experiences, he says. “Responding with empathy means letting your employee know you heard and understood both what they said, as well as how they feel,” he says. “It’s harder than it sounds, and will take some practice, but people will appreciate even the clumsiest of efforts.”

Asking questions is a good place to begin. “Don’t limit your questions to what they’re thinking,” Aitken says. “Ask how they feel, or check an observation you’re having, such as by saying, ‘I noticed you haven’t said much about this change. How’s this going for you?’” Once a leader can understand the emotions of others, they can better align them with tasks to achieve better outcomes.

10. Recognize that building EI takes work

“When people read about emotional intelligence, it seems pretty easy,” says Dr. David Caruso, management psychologist and research associate with the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. “And it is pretty easy. What’s hard is to do these things on a consistent basis and in real time. You have to practice.” The good news is that it can be a dynamic process and its effects cumulative.

“The extent to which you can understand and manage your own emotions influences your ability to understand and manage other people’s emotions,” says Hasson. “And the more you understand other people’s emotions – their intentions, motivations and behavior – the more appropriately you can respond and the more effectively you can interact with them.”

Stephanie Overby is an award-winning reporter and editor with more than twenty years of professional journalism experience. For the last decade, her work has focused on the intersection of business and technology. She lives in Boston, Mass